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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. saw three major evils in the world, the evils of racial injustice, poverty, and war. MLK believed that by putting an end to these evils would have led humanity on the path to moral progress. Before MLK was assassinated, he was working on putting an end to the evils of poverty, both in his book *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, and with the march on Washington, D.C. he was planning referred to as the “Poor People’s Campaign”. MLK realized that poverty was a grave problem facing humanity, and still is to this day.

Studies have shown that poverty is linked with negative academic outcomes, chronic stress, lack of access to healthcare, and the list goes on and on. A more unfortunate fact is that millions of Americans of all races are impacted by poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau an estimated 38.1 million people as of 2018 still live in poverty. MLK realized that poverty didn’t just impact people of color, but millions of Americans of all colors and creed. That is why MLK worked on the Poor People’s Campaign to raise awareness of the toll poverty was taking on Americans, and propose a remedy to fix it.

MLK knew that America not only needed racial justice but economic justice as well. MLK realized that many Americans were stuck in the cycle of poverty, and in a speech said, “Now we realize that dislocations in the market operations of our economy and the prevalence of discrimination thrust people into idleness and bind them in constant or frequent unemployment against their will.” That is why he sought out a solution to abolish the heavy toll of poverty.

In his book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, he said, “I’m now convinced that the simplest approach will prove the most effective - the solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income.” Or maybe, as it’s being referred to more and more commonly in 2019: Universal Basic Income. The guaranteed minimum income or UBI essentially ensures that all Americans would be able to live a sustainable life, and in decent circumstances, regardless of employment status, age, or race.

But why is a guaranteed income the solution to fixing poverty? Well for one it would, quite simply, ensure that every American receives a certain amount of money that would ensure that they are above the federal poverty line. By ensuring that no American lives in the squalor of

poverty, poverty would thus be eradicated. Of course, there are many more benefits to the implementation of the guaranteed minimum income, than just the eradication of poverty.

It would also give workers more freedom in choice in their labor. A sad reality is that many people are unhappy and unsatisfied with their work, and was it not for the need to survive, they would be more willing to take the risk of finding work more satisfactory and meaningful to them. But unfortunately many stay unhappy and unsatisfied just to be able to put food on the table. Were they to know that they would be able to put food on their table, many would feel more comfortable in searching for more meaningful work without having to ask themselves, "How will I be able to eat?"

Many will say the implementation of such a program will eliminate incentives to work. But in fact, it allows people to do more meaningful work that may not be valued highly economically. As stated earlier, a minimum guaranteed income ensures that they'll be able to meet their basic needs while still doing what they love. For some that may mean being a caregiver, or stay-at-home mom, both of which are not highly valued economically. The implementation of a guaranteed minimum income sends a message to those who do meaningful work that is not reflected in their salary, that your country has your back.

That's why MLK worked hard in the last years of his life to eradicate poverty with a minimum guaranteed income. One of the biggest goals of the Poor People's Campaign was to pass an economic bill of rights. That economic bill of rights would ensure that every American received a minimum guaranteed income to live a decent life. Imagine an America where everyone has economic freedom, to pursue their passions, live happily, and be free from the fear of not being able to provide. The America envisioned is one with a minimum guaranteed income. It is unfortunate that MLK isn't alive to see the eradication of poverty. But maybe there are people alive who can pick up where MLK left off, and make his dream of a poverty-free country come true.